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Introduction

Asda is a UK based supermarket chain that is operating since 1949. The business base of operation is in Leeds UK. It has operations in more than 633 places (ASDA, 2021). More than 1650000 employees work with the business. Because of the pandemic, flexible working has become an important aspect. Most employees want to make sure that they have the chance of flexible work. The aim of this report is to analyse the potential impact of flexible working. This will be also focused on developing a case in favour of flexible working and a case against flexible working.

The potential impact of flexible working

The ways in which the working process meets the needs and wants of the employees is known as flexible working (Teasdale, 2012). This has become a huge trend after the pandemic hit the world. This has brought positive results for some of the businesses in the world and this creates some problems as well. That is why the management of Asda before offering the flexible working opportunity to its employees must need to have knowledge about how it will affect a business. Some of the potential impact of flexible working on a business includes:

Increases efficiency and productivity: This might be the outcome which will want to have. That means a business like Asda might like that the flexible working opportunity that the business is offering will increase the efficiency and productivity of employees (Tasrin et al., 2021). In most cases, this has been found out. Most of the research which has been done on this topic found that the employees who have the chance to determine their own work will be more productive than the employees of the business who do not have that opportunity. That means, Asda should offer its employees the chance to work flexibly.

Employee satisfaction: If Asda has the ability to ensure that the employees of the business are satisfied then it will have an impact on the ability to have a competitive advantage in the business in the market (Subramaniam et al., 2021). A flexible working opportunity has the chance to make sure that employees will be satisfied because in this employees can choose the ways in which they will work and the feedback which an employee will get will be close to the expectation of the employees. For that reason, the employees of a business might be satisfied because of this and that will ensure the success of the business in the market.

Ensure employee's better work-life balance: In modern times, work-life balance has been considered one of the most important aspects on which an employee focuses while choosing a job (Perry, 2010). Asda to ensure that employees will have a better work-life balance flexible working should offer. This will have an impact on the rate of employee satisfaction and employee productivity. Both of these two will bring a positive outcome for the business in the market. That means, offering flexible working opportunities will be beneficial for the business.

Lower employee retention: One of the most important reasons behind employee retention is employees' dissatisfaction and unable to offer rewards based on the work which they have done (Merone and Whitehead, 2021). Because of employee retention, Asda will have to face different types of problems like the overhead cost of the business will be increased and the ability of a business to offer the best quality to the customers as well. Flexible working will ensure that the employees will have a chance to work on their own terms and for that, the possibility of leaving a job for Asda might be reduced. This positive impact of flexible working for Asda.

Adaptability: This has been considered one of the most important positive impacts on Asda because of offering flexible working opportunities (de Menezes and Kelliher, 2011). For example, during the pandemic, the business which was able to ensure that the employees of the business has the adaptability opportunity had success. When an employee will have the chance to choose the best ways of working for the employee then it will be helpful for the business to make sure that it has the chance to adapt to any type of situation. The ability of Asda to have a competitive advantage in the market will be improved because of this.

Break collaboration: This is among the most important negative impact of flexible working that Asda might have to face in the market (Daniarsyah and Rahayu, 2020). When employees work together the chance of developing collaboration among the employees might be increased. But when an employee will work remotely because of having flexible working opportunities then the collaboration among the employees will not be strong and that will be a huge problem for a business. Asda's productivity might be affected negatively because of that.

Misuse of opportunity: Some of the employees who are getting flexible working opportunities might misuse that and it will be a huge problem (Chung et al., 2021). The ability of a business to have success in the market will be reduced because of that. That is why Asda must have to ensure that before offering flexible working opportunity the ways in which the employees can use that opportunity needs to be assessed. It will increase the chance of the business having a positive outcome in the market.

Loss of company culture: Among all the impacts of flexible working this is one of the most definite impacts because this type of working is still new (Chandra Putra et al., 2020). For example, if an employee wants that he/she will work remotely as the business offers flexible working opportunities then the culture of the business will break. Some of the employees might

find it difficult to adjust to the changing working culture and for that, the employees and the business might face a problem as well. That means, because of flexible working the culture of Asda will change and that will have an impact on the ability of a business employee to adjust.



Figure: Potential impact

Source: (Chung et al., 2021)

These are some of the potential impacts of flexible working on Asda. Some of these impacts are positive and some are not. But the management of Asda must have to assess both types of impact so that the best decision can be developed by the business. If the business can use this strategy with effectiveness then the business will have success in the market for that reason.

Case in favour of flexible working

Diversity and inclusion are interconnected but these two are different from one another. Diversity means, ensuring that the business will have employees from a different culture so that the ability of the business to offer the best to its employees can be improved (Buxton, 2014). On the other hand, inclusion means including the customs, manner, behaviour and other aspects in the working process so that every employee of a business can have a positive workplace to work on. Doing flexible working will be helpful. This will allow Asda to make sure that the working

environment which will be created will be on the basis of the preference of the employees. That means the employees have the chance to ensure that their own culture, working process, manner etc. has been included in the environment in which the employees are working.

But if the employees of a business do not have that chance then it might not be possible to ensure diversity and inclusion entirely. For example, an employee of Asda came from middle-east and the manager who is in charge of managing the employee is British (Brem and Viardot, 2013). It might be possible for a British manager to ensure that the working environment which the employee will have is perfect. That will reduce the chance of diversity and inclusion in the workplace. But if the employee had the chance to ensure that the employee has the chance to determine the working condition in which the employee will be working then it will be easy for the manager to ensure. In 69% of the cases, the employees have flexible working opportunity inclusion and diversity has been fully ensured and this is only 41% for the business which does not offer flexible work to their employees (Tasrin et al., 2021). The HR of Asda will have to play an important role to ensure that inclusion and diversity have been maintained by flexible working. Some of the roles include:

Assessing the needs: Before offering the flexible working opportunity for diversity and inclusion it is important to make sure that the management of the business assesses the needs first (Teasdale, 2012). Because that will be helpful to ensure that the most effective strategy has been developed. The success of the business will be ensured by that and diversity and inclusion as well.

Assessing the effectiveness: This is another important role of the HR manager because if the flexible working opportunity that the employees are enjoying is not effective to make sure that diversity and inclusion have been ensured the whole point of offering this type of opportunity will be in vain (Subramaniam et al., 2021). That is why the HR of Asda must have to assess the effectiveness of flexible working in the business.

Provide assistance: It is not necessary that an employee who has a flexible working opportunity will be able to develop an effective working condition. But an important which must have to be considered here is that the working environment in which the employees have been developed needs to be in accordance with the business as well because the success and goal achievement of the business must have to be ensured as well.

Clear communication: To promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace is important to make sure that employees and the management of the business have a clear knowledge about what is this and how an employee can ensure that (Perry, 2010). Developing clear communication is one of the most effective ways in which it has to be done. For that, the HR of a business needs to focus on that and it will be helpful to promote these.



Figure: HR roles

Source: (Subramaniam et al., 2021)

The case against flexible working

Not all the people who have researched this topic agreed with the fact that flexible working is good because this has the ability to promote inequality as well. A business cannot offer the flexible working opportunity to all the employees of the business and inequality in the workplace has been started from there (Merone and Whitehead, 2021). For example, if the management of Asda decide that the employees of the business will have the flexible working opportunity. Some of the employees will be under this. But as per the company ethics, a business should treat all of its employees equally. But because of this decision that chance will be reduced. Inequality in the workplace because of flexible working will be created in some other ways as well. The

employees of Asda who will have flexible working opportunities might think that they are special and for that, the employee who did not have the chance of flexible work should be treated badly (de Menezes and Kelliher, 2011). This will happen because of flexible working.

Inequality in Asda will be created in other ways as well because of flexible working opportunities. For example, the employee who will get the chance to work from home because of flexible working will have more job benefits like time savings. But the employees who are working in the office will not have that chance (Daniarsyah and Rahayu, 2020). This is a clear inequality in the business because of flexible working. HR of Asda must have to play the most important role in this aspect in ensuring that the management of the business has knowledge.

The HR of Asda can assess the process in which inequality can be developed because of offering flexible working. Then prepare a report and submit the report to the management (Chung et al., 2021). The management of the business can develop the decision based on that. But HR of a business must have to consider that flexible working is beneficial for the business. That is why it cannot be ignored. It is the responsibility of HR to find out an effective way so that the business can have the benefit of flexible working and at the same time inequality has been reduced. To do that, HR can focus on a systematic process (Chandra Putra et al., 2020). At first, HR must have to find out the reason for which inequality has been created because of flexible working. Then on the basis of that possible solution has to be developed. The solution which will be useful to ensure that the business will be able to enjoy the benefit of flexible working and inequality problem can be reduced needs to be found out. Then HR should report it to the management. In this process, Asda will be able to solve the problem of inequality. If HR did not follow this systematic process then there will have a problem relating to business law and business ethics. As per “The Companies Act – 2006”, a business that is operating in the UK must have to offer equal opportunity to all of its employees.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, it can be said that flexible working can offer benefits to Asda but business management must have to be careful while using this strategy. The potential impact that flexible working might have because of flexible working includes increasing employee productivity, employee satisfaction, reduction in job retention and reduce cost. But there might be some negative impacts as well like reducing collaboration and misuse of power. Flexible working can promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace. HR will have to play the most important role. But it will create an inequality problem. HR needs to raise the concern and suggest a solution to the problem. Overall, flexible working is beneficial for Asda and for that it is highly recommended that the business should use it.

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